

The University of Chicago

THE DATE AND LITERARY RELATIONS OF "WOODSTOCK"

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE FACULTY IN CANDIDACY
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE
AND LITERATURE

1931

By

FRED BENJAMIN MILLETT

Private Edition, Distributed by
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I

The Nature of the Play and its Problems

In British Museum Egerton Manuscript 1994,¹ a collection of plays presumably from Elizabethan and Jacobean times, there is an unnamed drama which deals with certain events in the reign of Richard II of England. This play has been variously entitled An Anonymous Tragedy of Richard II, The First Part of Richard II, The First Part of the Reign of King Richard the Second, or more simply Thomas of Woodstock. The following study, throughout which the piece will be referred to as Woodstock, investigates the literary relationships of this play, attempts to establish its date, and uses it as a starting point for a consideration of the conventions of the Elizabethan chronicle play.

The play represents the struggle for power between Richard and his lowly born followers on the one hand and his noble uncles, the Dukes of Gloucester, Lancaster, and York on the other. Its climax is the murder of Gloucester under the King's orders, and its dénouement is the defeat of the King in the field by the brothers of the murdered man. A summary of the action of the piece may assist the reader in his appreciation of the ensuing discussion.²

¹Rotographed by the Modern Language Association of America, and deposited in the Library of Congress for the use of scholars.

²The division of the play into acts and scenes has been incompletely carried out in the manuscript. In this analysis,

The play opens abruptly with the startling discovery by the dukes that they were on the point of being poisoned by a creature of the King's. They bemoan the fact that the King has not inherited the virtues of his father, the Black Prince, but Gloucester defends the King on the grounds of his youth. He hopes much from the impending marriage of Richard and Anne of Bohemia, and is persuaded by his brothers to put off his customary plain attire for apparel more suitable to the ceremonies of the following day. There follows a scene in which the King's adherents, Greene and Bagot, express their fury over the discovery of their plot, warn the pompous justice Tresilian that he is to be made Lord Chief Justice, and leave him to announce his new dignity to his satirical but sprightly servant, Nimble. The third scene, which takes place immediately after the wedding, opens propitiously, but Woodstock, who speaks his mind freely to the new Queen on the subject of Richard's weaknesses, provokes the latter to taunts, and in the ensuing quarrel between the dukes and their antagonists, a disagreement which the Queen attempts to mitigate, the King gives the offices held by his uncles to his followers, and the uncles in anger, though Woodstock counsels moderation, leave the court and retire to their estates.

The second act opens with the courtiers determined to

Keller's division of the play will be followed, though he has not observed the Elizabethan principle of division into scenes in Act V.

push their advantages to the utmost. Richard demands the lives of his obstreperous uncles, since Tresilian declares that their actions have been traitorous, but the latter's reminder of the devotion of the common people to the dukes prevents open and immediate violence. Then Bussy reads from the chronicles an account of the battle of Poitiers, of King Edward's hanging of Mortimer, and of the birth of Richard himself. Richard, maintaining that his uncles have concealed his correct age from him, determines to claim the supreme power at the Parliament which his uncles have called without consulting him. Before the Parliament scene, the Queen begs the uncles to treat Richard leniently. The Lord Protector, Woodstock, presents to Richard petitions against his followers, but Richard, after stating his claim to power in the guise of a lawsuit, dismisses his uncles and appoints his followers to places on the Council. His first acts as sovereign in his own right are to create a guard of archers for himself and to order daily feasts for ten thousand at Westminster. This act ends weakly with a humdrum scene of the Queen's philanthropies and of Richard's frivolity in devising and flaunting new-fangled clothes.

Act III illustrates seriously and comically the more striking tyrannies of Richard. Tresilian has prepared blank charters which are to be signed by wealthy subjects and filled in at the King's pleasure. There is further discussion of the fashioning of strange new attire by Richard's followers. Tresilian is despatched to Bedfordshire to get signatures to the

charters. Then at Pleshey, the dukes discuss Richard's misdemeanors, Cheney displays sample charters for their indignant perusal, and Gloucester suffers from forebodings concerning England's future, and enjoys a highly satirical scene with a foppish courtier sent by Richard to summon Gloucester back to court for the sake of appearances. Gloucester, however, refuses to go. The act ends with an elaborate comic scene in which Nimble, Tresilian's Vice-like servant, and Master Ignorance, the bailiff of Dunstable, apprehend as dangerous to the King, three yokels, hurrying away from the market in order to avoid signing the charters, a schoolmaster, who has written a libellous song against Richard's faction, and a man whistling for two lost calves.

The fourth act exhibits the height of Richard's tyranny and his preparation for the murder of Woodstock. His avaricious followers draw up a scheme for Richard's farming out the kingdom to them, and devise a plot for the capture of Gloucester. Richard determines to accuse his uncles of treason, to hand over Guines and Calais to the French in return for their support, and divides his kingdom among Bussy, Greene, Bagot, and Tresilian. At Pleshey, the Duchess of Gloucester, summoned to court by the illness of the Queen, leaves her husband reluctantly, for she has just dreamed of his death. After her departure, maskers appear to entertain Gloucester, but hustle him off, despite his protestations, to a boat bound for Calais. The final scene of this rather weak act shows Richard's intense

grief at the death of Anne, his order for the destruction of Sheen, and his regrets that he has ordered the murder of Gloucester.

The major part of the fifth act presents the murder of Gloucester, and the resulting armed conflict between Richard and the dukes. The murder is prepared for and carried out elaborately. LaPoole, the Governor of Calais, tells the hireling murderers that the victim must seem to have died naturally, and, once alone, weighs his reluctance for the deed against his fear of Richard. Then to the sleeping duke, appear the ghosts of the Black Prince and of Edward III, urging him to wake and fly. Awakened, Gloucester is at first terror-stricken, and then upborne by the consciousness of his own innocence. LaPoole begs him to ask forgiveness of the King, and Gloucester, persisting in his guiltlessness, sits down to write an admonitory epistle to Richard. As he writes, the murderers set upon him, strangle him, and smother him under a featherbed. Then LaPoole orders his guard to slay the murderers and throw their bodies in the sea. The remainder of the act shows in brief and conventional scenes Tresilian's fear on the battlefield, the grief of the Duchess of Gloucester, the defiance of the lords confronting Richard, Greene's death and Richard's outburst of grief over him, the acknowledgement of defeat by Richard's followers, and his determination to seek refuge in the Tower. The manuscript ends with Nimble's saving his own neck by handing the trembling Tresilian over to the lords. The play, as it

comes down to us, is incomplete, but the approaching conclusion is apparent. A brief scene of triumph on the part of the lords would have constituted a makeshift though unhistorical conclusion.

The initial impression made by this unnamed and undated tragedy is of the curious transmutation the history of Richard's period has gone through in its transformation into a chronicle play. The negligence of all right chronology is not surprising in view of the prevalent habit of Elizabethan dramatists of foreshortening historical perspective for the sake of interlocking significant or impressive dramatic actions. Accordingly, we are not too astonished to discover a telescoping of personages and events which no chronicler was so inexperienced as to present. We are not surprised to discover the group of Richard's followers to be composed of Tresilian, who belongs historically with the early group around de Vere and De la Pole, and the notorious Bussy, Greene, and Bagot of the ultimate years of Richard's life. We are, however, somewhat astonished to discover that a character so definitely associated in history with the death of Gloucester as the Duke of Norfolk, should not appear in the action at all, and that his significant position and action should be attributed to a Lapoole, who in point of fact was not at all concerned. Our greatest astonishment is aroused by the transformation that Thomas of Woodstock, Duke of Gloucester, has undergone at the hands of the nameless author. Such a distortion of the generally accepted facts raises imme-

diately the question of the motive of the author, a question which involves the nature and conduct of the whole piece as well as the treatment of the character of Gloucester alone.

It is evident from even a casual reading of the piece that the author intended to build his play upon the subject of tyranny in opposition to wise and just leadership. In pursuit of this theme, it was relatively easy to make out a case of tyranny against Richard himself, as in fact the Lancastrians were able to do; but it was also necessary to find a hero who should personify the forces of good in combat with presumptuous evil. The most conspicuous of Richard's alleged victims was the Duke of Gloucester, and this figure offered therefore the most obvious opportunity for the idealization which the author's theme necessitated. To be sure, there was little in the chronicles to warrant the rehabilitation of Gloucester as a liberal and popular hero, but in the popularity of his vigorous war-policy against France our author may have found the seed which his calculating imagination impregnated. Further, there is considerable evidence to support Keller's thesis that to the Duke of Gloucester have been transferred, consciously or unconsciously, some of the attributes of the "good Duke Humphrey" of The Second Part of Henry VI.¹ That there is no warrant in history for "plain Thomas", solicitous of the welfare of the commons, and devoted unselfishly to the good of the kingdom, more-

¹Shakespeare Jahrbuch, XXXV (1899), 27-28.

over, with a patience unmoved in the very face of death, hardly needs to be asserted here.

One of the most powerful of the aesthetic principles which influenced the author was that of contrast, and again and again he sacrificed historical tradition and the received facts to this effective though somewhat mechanically employed principle. An instance of this is the simple contrast between York and Lancaster, the former, in accordance with tradition, mild and relenting, the latter, fiery and choleric. It is illustrated further in the elaboration of the character of the Queen. Since there was little in popular or chronicle tradition to check the author's creative imagination, it was possible to raise her to the status of an important figure in contrast to Richard. This she becomes, first as a frequent mediator between Richard and his uncles and then in her rôle as Lady Bountiful to the nation's needy whose wealth, when he could wring it from them, Richard was only too delighted to spend in riotous and prodigal hospitality. Despite the opposition in their natures, Richard's attachment to this excellent if somewhat bourgeois lady seems genuine, and from her own lips we have assurance that in Richard's love she is happy.¹

¹Woodstock, ll. 1046-49.

I doe not sorrow in myne own behalfe
 nor now repent wth peeuish frowardness
 & wish I nere had seene this english shoare
 but think me happie in king Richards loue

Throughout this study the edition cited is that in the "Malone Society Reprints" (London, 1929), edited by Wilhelmina P. Frijlinck.

Another kind of contrast, distinct from that of character, arises from the admixture of tragedy and comedy. The amount of comedy in this play and its nature are alike significant. The proportion of comedy to tragedy in this play is perhaps an evidence of the period, the early nineties, to which I believe it can be demonstrated that the play belongs. The nature of the comedy also is reminiscent of the taste and method of the earlier rather than the later chronicle-play. The prominence given to Nimble in the comic scenes (and indeed, he is the comic protagonist), and his inheritance of the Vice-tradition of the folk-drama, are indicative of the taste and time of the play. The comic scenes are in the main poor stuff, but they display an elaborateness of treatment which far surpasses the sketchiness of the comic passages in The Victories of Henry V and Jack Straw, for example. The best of the comic scenes is that of the apprehension of the yokels (Act III, sc. iii), which is marked by some realism and an effective use of unconscious irony on the parts of all concerned. The bailiff, though most indifferently handled, belongs obviously to the type of which Dogberry is the classic example. There is also a very good comic scene between Gloucester and the foppish courtier: Gloucester's address to the courtier's horse, his interest in the courtier's fantastic apparel, and the latter's difficulty in the delivery of his message in Euphuistic language, make amusing and rather sharp satire.¹ It can hardly

¹The relation of this scene to the Osric scene in Hamlet

be credited, however, despite the importance given to the comic element, that the play ended upon a light note. The symmetry of the play required the defeat of the frivolous but dangerous king, and I have no doubt that the author brought his play to the conclusion which the text indicates, in a scene in which the uncles declare their supremacy and witness the discomfiture of Richard's followers.

Although probably no one except the author ever regarded Woodstock as a good play, it is not entirely ineffective. The trend of the action, the handling of the characters, the versification, are not distinguished enough to afford any but the most uncritical any aesthetic pleasure. On the other hand, the author must have had a strong feeling for dramatic structure and emphasis, and for the well-developed scene. The play is almost too symmetrical in design; structurally, it might have been written after the publication of Freytag's diagrams rather than two and a half centuries before. A very considerable number of the scenes show a sense, rather unusual in the early Elizabethans, of the necessity of working out to their full effectiveness the potentialities of a given situation. Of scenes that are structurally effective, we may mention the abrupt and startling opening, superior in its impetus to the conventionally expository methods in many of Shakspeare's beginnings, the strife at the wedding, the capture of Gloucester,

is considered on pages 143-45, below. This reference is to the complete dissertation, which is to be found only in the University of Chicago Libraries.

the farming out of the kingdom, and the murder of Gloucester at Calais. In a number of these instances, the author leaned heavily on tried and true conventions of the popular Elizabethan theatre: the ghosts, the differentiation between the murderers, the gruseome details, and the soliloquy before death, the use of a dramatic entertainment to advance the action, but it is possible that these conventions seemed much less stale to the Elizabethans than they do to us.¹

Though the versification on the whole is mediocre, the pentameter is handled with some skill: it usually escapes rigidity and monotony, although it shows a far greater regularity than we find in Shakspeare's middle period or in the common practice of Fletcher. The verse has not escaped entirely from the bondage of rhyme. Couplets crop up, not only at the ends of scenes, but also at the ends of speeches, at the exits of characters, and in fairly continuous passages embodying emotional material. Imaginatively, the verse is utterly mediocre. Many of the lines are not only banal but naïve and childish. In so highly imitative a writer, it is difficult to understand why he should not have imitated better models if those better and later models had been available.²

It is not to be denied, despite the perversion of history involved in this play, that the character of Richard is

¹For a discussion of the tragic and comic conventions, see Chapters VI and VII (of the complete dissertation).

²A detailed study of the versification will be found below in Chapter V (of the complete dissertation).

delineated with some plausibility and insight. He is, to be sure, neither a subtle nor an intricate character, but some of the traits of the historical Richard have been combined to make a petty tyrant and a good foil for godly Gloucester. One's strongest impression of Richard from this play is of his light-mindedness. His is a shallow and a frivolous personality. He is comfort-loving and self-indulgent. He has extravagant tastes and no inclination to face the problems of kingship with what intelligence he can muster. He finds restraint irksome, and favors his followers when they encourage him in unrestraint. When at last he finds himself in uncontrolled power, he is impetuous and thoughtless in his proposed use of it. He countenances, with an entire disregard of moral consideration, any means, however cruel and unlawful, to the securing of that extravagant and untroubled idleness which constitutes his idea of a happy life.

The matter of Richard's emotional relationships needs somewhat fuller statement. In his devotion to Anne there is every reason to believe, even though (and this fact has its psychological significance) her advice weighs little with him in comparison with that of his followers. In his outburst at the time of her death, there is no suggestion of remorse over his neglect of her. Moreover, his reaction against his own orders for the death of Gloucester is intelligible in his overwrought state and his recollection of the attempts of Anne to keep peace between himself and his uncles. There is, however,

no doubt that Richard's attachment to his followers was accompanied by considerable emotion. The only one of them, however, to be singled out for special attention is Greene, whose relation to the King parallels in a slight and decent way the attachment of Edward II to Gaveston. There are, moreover, reminiscences of the phrasing of Edward II which go beyond anything in Shakspeare's Richard II, to warrant our recognizing an unnatural element in this devotion. The epithet sweet which is again and again applied to Greene, the designation of Greene, by the more conventional followers, as the one who could most certainly win the King over to their wishes, the familiarity (or is it humor?) of Greene's addressing the King as "sweet bully", and above all, the emotional and physical elements evident in the King's lament over the body of the dead Greene¹ are of some slight importance in indicating an unnatural element in Richard's emotional relationships.

The history of the scholarship connected with Woodstock may be sketched as follows. In 1865, at Sotheby's sale of the library of the late Lord Charlemont, the authorities of the British Museum purchased, at the negligible sum of thirty-three pounds, a manuscript volume containing fifteen plays of the Elizabethan or Jacobean periods.² Seven of the plays are probably playhouse copies, since seven contain additional stage-

¹Woodstock, ll. 2874-86.

²F.S. Boas, Shakespeare and the Universities (New York, 1923), pp. 96-110, gives the fullest description and discussion of the manuscript, now known as Egerton 1994.

directions and the indications of cuts, and four contain the names of actors who in some cases have been identified doubtfully as belonging to the second and third decades of the seventeenth century. The anonymous play covering certain events in the reign of Richard II covers folios 161a to 185b of the manuscript volume. Keller has pointed out what none of the later students of the manuscript have noticed, that the manuscript of the Richard II play was four to five centimeters shorter than that of the other plays in this collection, and that the binder, in order to make the whole volume of apparently uniform height, has raised and lowered alternate pages, to match the length of the other pages of the manuscript.¹ It may have been at this period or earlier that the last page or pages of this play were lost. It is doubtful, however, that much of the play has been lost, since the action of the later scenes requires but a brief conclusion, and the play already runs to 2989 lines of prose and verse.²

In 1870 the still unhyphenated Halliwell printed eleven copies of the play in question under the title of A Tragedy of

¹Shakespeare Jahrbuch, XXXV (1899), 4.

²The state of the text makes it impossible to ascertain the exact number of prose and verse lines respectively. Some of the passages which appear in the manuscript as prose, Keller restored to their proper alignment as verse; his total for the number of lines is 2946. There are, however, other passages which can easily be scanned as blank verse of perfect regularity. That the play, as it stands, is of normal Elizabethan length may be concluded by a comparison with the following figures: Richard III, 3599; Richard II, 2644; 1 Henry IV, 3170; 2 Henry IV, 3437; 1 Henry VI, 2693; 2 Henry VI, 3032; 3 Henry VI, 2904. These figures are adopted from W.A. Neilson and A.H. Thorndike, The Facts about Shakespeare (New York, 1927), pp.71-2.

King Richard the Second. On April 1, of the following year, the Athenaeum printed a short note by Halliwell, calling attention to the volume of manuscript plays, to his reprint just mentioned, and to the possibility that a competent judge of old handwriting might "be induced to give an opinion respecting its date, and introduce to the further notice of the public a volume which well deserves to be better known". He further denied that it was what a friend had claimed of it "a very clever imitation of an old drama, but not the old drama itself", and asserted that he would consider it, "judging from internal evidence", as "composed. . . previously to the appearance of Shakespeare's play on other events of the same reign, and written with no small ability".¹

No one seems to have come to the rescue of Halliwell, for the first edition of Ward's History of English Dramatic Literature (1875) did not mention the play even by title, and in the second edition of 1899, he knew of the play only from Stokes' mention of it, in 1878, as "A play, anterior to Shakespeare's, entitled 'The Tragedy of Richard II, concluding with the murder of the Duke of Gloster at Calais'."²

In 1885, however, the play began to attract something of the attention that it deserves. A.H. Bullen, in his Collection of Old English Plays, gave some of the details concerning the

¹The Athenaeum, April 1, 1871, p. 401.

²H.P. Stokes, An Attempt to Determine the Chronological Order of Shakspeare's Plays (London, 1878), p. 44. "Of this play", Ward (1899) II, 103, says, "I know nothing".

manuscript, agreed with Halliwell that the play was "anterior to Shakespeare's play, despite such extravagance of language as one might expect about 1593, and likewise a greater variety in the management of the blank verse".¹ He went on to give a sketch of the action, and quoted several passages, but at last desisted with the remark, "I will not inflict more of this stuff on the reader". He added ironically that one of the most rhetorical speeches, that of the ghost of Edward III, was "worthy of Robert Greene". In this same year, came the first considerable discussion of both the character and the date of this play. On Friday, April 10, 1885, at a meeting of the New Shakspeare Society, with Dr. Furnivall in the chair, Mr. F.A. Marshall read a paper on the anonymous Richard II, in which he

read an analysis of the plot, some extracts from the play, beginning with the opening scene, to show the dramatic force, stir, and bustle with which the play opens, and a list of some words and phrases common to Shakspeare's Richard II and this play. He also gave a list of the remarkable and peculiar words and phrases, and a metrical analysis, which yielded the following results: Unstopped lines, an average of 1 in 9; double-endings, 1 in 6; rhymed lines, 1 in 7. Mr. Marshall said that the construction of the piece was of more than average merit, and the language, though deficient in poetic beauty, was vigorous, dramatic, and to the purpose. The play read as if it had been much "cut" for acting, and that by the actors themselves, and he held the author to have been either an actor or one practically acquainted with the stage, and most probably a dramatist of some experience. He drew attention to the elaboration of the satire directed throughout the play against the fiscal oppressions of Richard II, and suggested that the author might be looked for among those

¹Collection of Old English Plays (London, 1883), II, Appendix 1.

who were least favourably inclined to Elizabeth's government.

In the discussion that followed, Dr. Furnivall and the Reverend W.A. Harrison attacked vigorously the theory that the play antedated Shakspeare's and introduced as evidence arguments for a later date which we shall consider in Chapter VIII. At the conclusion of the discussion, Mr. Marshall meekly agreed to the later date.¹

For the next fourteen years, the play seems to have attracted no attention, except that, in 1891, Fleay queried whether or not the play might have been acted by the Queen's men about 1591.² In 1895, Sir Israel Gollancz, in editing Richard II for the "Temple Shakespeare", noticed our play with the remark that "Mr. Halliwell claimed that the play was composed before Shakespeare's, but this view has been rightly contested (Cp. New Shakespeare Society's Transactions, April 10th, 1885), and in all probability the production belongs to the end of the first quarter of the seventeenth century."³ On this ground he omitted any discussion of the relation between this and Shakspeare's play.

The year 1899 saw the first scholarly edition of this play, an edition which has been the basis of all the succeeding

¹The New Shakspeare Society's Transactions (London, 1880-86), pp. ~~144~~¹⁴⁴145.

²Biographical Chronicle of the English Drama (London, 1891), II, 320. The play is not mentioned in his Chronicle History of the English Stage (London, 1890).

³Richard II, "The Temple Shakespeare" (London, 1895), p. vii.

discussion up to 1929. In the former year Wolfgang Keller published an edition with notes on the manuscript readings, and a substantial introduction, discussing the manuscript, the historical sources, the dramatic sources, with especial reference to Edward II and the Second Part of Henry VI, the technical structure of the piece, the relationship to Shakspeare's Richard II, the language and metre, the date and authorship of the play.¹ This remains the most thoroughgoing study of the literary aspects of the play up to the present time.

The availability of the text stimulated in the next few years considerable discussion and comment. As early as 1901, F.I. Carpenter published notes and emendations of the text as printed by Keller, based on an independent study of the manuscript, accepted the date of about 1591 for the play, and suggested the possible authorship of Nashe or Lodge, since Peele and Greene seemed out of the question on the ground of the style of the play.² In the following year, an article by F.S. Boas summarized the action of the play, quoted generously from it, and discussed the probable date, which he was persuaded was pre-Shakspearean.³ In the same year (1902) appeared Felix E. Schelling's pioneer study of The English Chronicle Play.

¹Wolfgang Keller, "Richard II. Erster Teil. Ein Drama aus Shakespeares Zeit", Shakespeare Jahrbuch, XXXV, 3-121. The text itself covers pages 44 to 121.

²Journal of English and Germanic Philology, III, 138-42.

³F.S. Boas, "A pre-Shakspearean Richard II", The Fortnightly Review, LXXII, n.s., 391-404. In the following year, Mr. Boas' article was mentioned in the Shakespeare Jahrbuch, XXXIX, 328, without comment.

Schelling summarized and quoted from the play, praised its regularity of form, and considered without the details of Keller the evidence for the influence of Edward II and The Second Part of Henry VI, especially on the scene of Woodstock's murder. He was of the opinion that the play probably belongs in point of time, before Richard II, and synchronizes with the plays it imitates.¹ In 1908, in his Elizabethan Drama Schelling repeated in summary the views of the play expressed in his earlier book.²

In 1909, appeared the Fourth Volume of Creizenach's Geschichte des neueren Dramas. While the general discussion of the play in question was deferred to the Fifth Volume, it was cited in his survey of the stage and its literature, to illustrate certain conventions: the rare use of economic causes as the ground for dramatic action;³ the rare attempt to get historical accuracy in stage costume;⁴ the use of kinsmen and scions of the royal house as the heroes of historical

¹The English Chronicle Play (New York, 1902), pp. 98-108.

²Elizabethan Drama (Boston, etc., 1908), I, 280. Schelling's reference (II, 478) to an article on the relation between the anonymous Richard II and the Spanish Tragedy is incorrect. The article in question, M.S. Nesbitt, Notes and Queries, Series X, IV, p. 323 (1905) refers instead to the Shakspearean play.

³A comparison between the German edition (1909) and the English translation of this volume, which appeared in 1916 revised by Creizenach, shows no substantial changes. I have, however, given the references to both editions. Creizenach, Geschichte, IV, 201; The English Drama in the Age of Shakespeare, 176.

⁴Creizenach, Geschichte, IV, 180, n. 3; The English Drama, 158, n. 4.

drama;¹ the repentant second murderer;² the Vice-like servant of the chronicle play;³ the figure adynaton;⁴ the significance of the word Enter of characters at work;⁵ the appearance of horses on the stage.⁶

A comprehensive study of the sources of Woodstock is to be found in Robert Metcalf Smith's Froissart and the English Chronicle Play (1915).⁷ Accepting Keller's finding as to the date, Smith makes a careful study of the sources and goes beyond Keller in demonstrating that the Berners' translation of Froissart as well as Grafton's Chronicle and Holinshed's furnished material for the author where he did not prefer to depend upon his own inventiveness. In the following year, appeared the Fifth Volume of Creizenach's great history. Here, after a brief discussion of the date of the piece, he devoted several pages to an appreciation of its rather unusual qualities.⁸

In 1921 L.M. Buell, in editing Richard II, considered

¹Creizenach, Geschichte, IV, 207; The English Drama, 181.

²Creizenach, Geschichte, IV, 329; The English Drama, 290.

³Creizenach, Geschichte, IV, 346; The English Drama, 305.

⁴Creizenach, Geschichte, IV, 380; The English Drama, 333-

4. The English translation adds the following references to note 1: Winter's Tale, I. ii. 427; the anonymous Richard II, p. 67.

⁵Creizenach, Geschichte, IV, 422, n. 1; The English Drama, 372, n. 1.

⁶Creizenach, Geschichte, IV, 442, n. 1; The English Drama, 388, n. 1.

⁷Op. cit. (New York, 1915), pp. 115-30. The only reference to the play in the Cambridge History of English Literature is J.W. Cunliffe's remark that in the pre-Shakspearean Richard II as in The Troublesome Reign of King John (1591) "we catch the first tones of the voice of Elizabethan England." V, 93, n. 1.

⁸Geschichte des neueren Dramas (Halle, 1916), V, 71-75.

briefly the relationship of it and Woodstock, accepted a pre-Shaksperean date, and offered arguments against viewing it as the first part of Shakspeare's Richard II.¹

In 1923 F.A. Boas, on the occasion of the publication of his Shakespeare and the Universities, reviewed his earlier opinions of the play,² which he calls Thomas of Woodstock, and presented the evidence which led him to change his earlier view that the play was assuredly pre-Shaksperean. This evidence, introduced in full into his revision of the article, led him to the almost certain conclusion that the play was written after the unions of the crowns of England and Scotland.³

In 1923 Sir Edmund Chambers, commenting briefly on the play, accepted a date between 1592 and 1595, disputed Boas' identification of the actors' names in the text, and remarked that "the relation of 1 Richard II to Shakspeare's play is so close as to make it natural to regard it as having become a Chamberlain's play".⁴ Mention should also be made of the series of articles by M. Paul Reyher, in which he uses Woodstock freely as a source of parallels for Richard II, although he acknowledges that the problems of the play's date and its relationship to Richard II are still open.⁵

¹ L. M. Buell, The Tragedy of King Richard the Second, The Yale Shakespeare (New Haven, 1921), pp. 123-24.

² See above, p. 18. The revised article appears on pages 163-65 of this collection of Mr. Boas' articles.

³ This evidence is examined in detail in Chapter VIII (of the complete dissertation).

⁴ The Elizabethan Stage (Oxford, 1923), IV, 42-43.

⁵ Paul Reyher, "Notes sur les Sources de Richard II", Revue de l'enseignement des langues vivantes, XLII (1924), 1-13; 54-64; 106-14; 158-68.

In a letter to the (London) Times Literary Supplement of July 17, 1924, Mr. Bertram Lloyd argued that the reference to Woodstock in Jonson's The Devil is an Ass is to this play, and that consequently the play must have been written before 1616, when we know the latter play to have been produced.

In 1929 the Malone Society reprinted the play under the title of The First Part of the Reign of King Richard the Second or Thomas of Woodstock, with a long critical study of the textual problems involved, by Miss Wilhelmina P. Frijlinck. Since this is the most carefully printed text, up to the present time, the references in the following pages are, unless otherwise noted, to this edition.

Various problems are suggested immediately by a survey of the work already done on Woodstock, and others are raised by a more minute study of the text than it has as yet received. The major problem is, perhaps, that of the date of the play, and the other approaches made to it in the following pages are intended to throw a dim or a sharp light on that central problem. But other problems of perhaps more real significance are those of the play's relationship, near or remote, to the drama of the period, in particular, its relationship to Richard II, which has never been adequately discussed, its metre, style, and the state of the text. Of broader significance are the illustrations to be found in the play of the force of convention, in the chronicle play and related types of drama, in the shaping of character, situation, idea, and diction.

VIII

The Problem of the Date

The most controverted problem raised by Woodstock, is that of its date. As a prelude to a summing up of some of the most significant evidence bearing upon this problem, it may be well to outline the arguments offered by earlier students of the play, dispose of those which are least significant, and indicate those in support of which the most reliable evidence has been assembled.

The question at issue is whether the play under discussion belongs to the first half of the last decade of the sixteenth century or to the latter part of the first quarter of the seventeenth.

A marshalling of the authorities in accordance with their views on the date of this piece produces the following results: in favor of a date in the first half of the last decade of the sixteenth century are Halliwell, Stokes, Bullen (doubtfully), Fleay, Keller, Carpenter, Schelling, R.M. Smith, Creizenach, Saintsbury, Cunliffe, Buell, Reyner, and Chambers. In favor of a date well into the Jacobean period are Furnivall, W.A. Harrison, Gollancz, and lately, Boas, although, as we have seen,¹ he has shifted from the former to the latter view in the progress of his study of the play. The weight of

¹See Chapter I, above, pp. 18 and 20.

authority is obviously on the side of the earlier date, but to arrive at a dependable conclusion, it will be necessary to inspect the evidence which has already been submitted, and to adduce, if possible, additional evidence which has never been noted. It should also be observed that the preponderance of authority in favor of the early date of Woodstock is not so great as our list suggests since a number of the "authorities" cited have simply accepted an earlier opinion without a quest for new evidence or without much conscious weighing of evidence already available.

To clarify the discussion, we may classify the arguments for and against an early date; thereafter, it will be necessary to consider and weigh them separately.

The arguments in support of an early date may be summarized as follows:

Woodstock is a close imitation of Edward II; (Keller, Boas, Schelling).

Woodstock is closely dependent upon The Second Part of Henry VI; (Keller, Boas, Creizenach, Schelling).

Woodstock not only preceded Shakespeare's Richard II but influenced it; (Keller, Boas, Creizenach).

The versification is characteristic of the nineties and not of a later date; (Keller, Boas, Creizenach, Bullen [?].)

Woodstock shows the influence of Richard III; (Creizenach).

The arguments in support of a Jacobean date for Woodstock may be stated as follows:

Shakespeare's Richard II influenced Woodstock;
(Furnivall, W.A. Harrison).

Shakspeare's Henry VI influenced Woodstock;
(Furnivall).

The scene of the foppish courtier is an imitation of the Osric scene in Hamlet; (Furnivall).

The use of the word coaches suggests a later date rather than an earlier; (Furnivall).

Other plays in Egerton Manuscript 1994 belong to the seventeenth century; (Harrison, Boas).

The manuscript itself belongs to the seventeenth century; (Harrison).

Richard III influenced this play; (Harrison).

The "two parts of Henry IV" influenced Woodstock;
(Harrison).

The metre has Jacobean rather than Elizabethan qualities; (Bullen [?], Boas).

The actors whose names appear in the manuscript belong to the second and third decades of the seventeenth century; (Boas).

The cuts were made by a seventeenth century censor; (Boas).

Most of the arguments hitherto offered in support of an early date concern the influence upon Woodstock of familiar plays of an early period. Such evidence, as is well known, must be handled with discrimination. In the first place, if borrowing has taken place, it must be established beyond dispute in which direction the borrowing occurred. Further, it must be made plain that the borrowing was from the specific source in question, and not from the stock of diction, figures of speech, situations, and characters, common to the dramatic

type of the period of both plays. These considerations have a bearing on several of the important arguments offered for an early date. Each of these arguments has been investigated separately, and the results of these investigations will be summarized later.

The arguments which have been offered in behalf of a seventeenth century date for Woodstock are numerous but in the main trivial. Some of these can be disposed of without elaborate discussion. One, I believe, may be regarded as a "ghost" argument and may be exorcised immediately.

At a meeting of the New Shakspeare Society, on April 10, 1885, the Rev. W.A. Harrison, in discussing the date of Woodstock, came to the conclusion, according to the printed minutes of the meeting, that "the writer must have had Shakspeare's Richard II, the two parts of Henry IV, and Richard III either in his hands, or at least strongly retained in his memory. It was not likely Shakspeare would copy from this play into three of his own; but not at all unlikely that the anonymous writer, who was evidently well read in Shakspeare's plays generally, should reproduce Shaksperian phrases in a single play of his own. Such a knowledge of Shakspeare the writer might have got from the Folio of 1623."¹

From what we already know of Woodstock's relationships to the dramas of its period, I am prepared to argue that the

¹Transactions of the New Shakspeare Society (London, 1880-86), Series I, 8, 9, 10, p. 145*.

play the Rev. Mr. Harrison actually alluded to, was not "the two parts of Henry IV", but the Second Part of Henry VI. I assume that the secretary made a perfectly comprehensible error in transcribing his notes of the meeting which are much more likely to have been taken in abbreviated longhand than in shorthand. What he probably noted was some such abbreviation as "2 Hen. VI", which he might easily misinterpret in transcription as the "two parts of Henry IV" rather than the Second Part of Henry VI. That such may have been the error is confirmed to a degree by the fact that the notes themselves mention specifically three plays, and not four as possible sources of Woodstock. There is only the slightest connection between Woodstock and Henry IV, not enough, I believe, to warrant our considering this argument in dating the plays.

Another minor argument offered by proponents of a Jacobean date involves no less a play than Hamlet in Shakspeare's version. On the occasion of the meeting just mentioned, Dr. Furnivall remarked, "The writer had plainly modelled one scene on that between Osric and Hamlet". It is true that the scene between Woodstock and the foppish courtier constitutes a surprising parallel to the Osric scene. With regard to this point, however, it may be suggested that the borrowing may have been from the old Hamlet which we know to have been widely admired and imitated. If this is the case, we may have found an explanation otherwise hard to come upon of the curious intrusion of the Osric scene late in the action of Shakspeare's play. Assum-

ing for the moment that Woodstock was written in the early nineties, and assuming consequently that the courtier scene imitates a passage in the old Hamlet, then we are justified in suggesting that Shakspeare retained the Osric scene and perfected it far beyond our author's capabilities, because it was in his original and because it had proved its popularity in a cruder form or because he himself saw the possibilities in the sketch that came down to him and was unable to resist developing them to the detriment of the rapid action required at this late point in his play. If this conclusion is based on too many if's and and's, we may account for the parallelism between the scenes on the ground that both writers within a decade of each other were drawing on their familiarity with the vast amount of satire of court-fops extant in dramatic and the non-dramatic literature of the period.¹

The other arguments for a Jacobean date all concern in a measure the state of the manuscript itself. Both Harrison and Boas contend that the fact that other plays in the Egerton collection belong to the seventeenth century favor a later date for Woodstock. In this connection, Harrison pointed out that, "as regards seven of the fifteen plays of which it is composed, there were either dates upon the MS. itself, or there were indications by which the date might be inferred with approximate exactness. This, of course, would not fix the dates of the re-

¹For an indication of the amount and range of this comic material, see Chapter VII (of the complete dissertation).

maining eight plays of which Richard II¹ formed one. But the fact of their being then bound up together was favourable and not antagonistic to the theory of their being of the same age.² On this point, moreover, Boas writes, "It has, moreover, to be borne in mind that all the plays of known date in Egerton MS. 1994 belong to the XVIIth century, and with the doubtful exception of Thomas of Woodstock, only one of the fifteen, Edmond Ironside, seems from internal evidence of style to be of earlier origin."³ With regard to this argument, it may be urged that though seven plays in the collection have been assigned with some certainty to the seventeenth century, the date of eight of the plays is as yet undetermined, and the element of the unknown is yet too large to warrant casting Woodstock definitely in with the seventeenth century group. Moreover, the play's appearance with a group of seventeenth century plays does not constitute anything like proof of the date of the play's origin. It merely indicates some sort of interest in the play during the early seventeenth century.

Harrison's argument from the age of the manuscript itself is hardly worth notice. He says, "Add to this the circumstance that the authorities in the MSS. department of the Museum have appended a note to the entry in the catalogue to the effect

¹I.e., Woodstock.

²Transactions of the New Shakspeare Society (London, 1880-86), Series I, 8, 9, and 10, p. 145*.

³Shakespeare and the Universities (New York, 1923), 163.

that the paper on which the whole series is written is 'of the first half of the seventeenth century.'¹ This argument establishes the fact that the plays in question were copied in the first half of the century; it establishes nothing as to the date of the original writing of the piece. Analogously, Chaucer's works would be dated by the fifteenth century or sixteenth century manuscripts in which they occur.

Further arguments for a late date concern the state of the text itself, vocabulary, meter, and cuts. The argument concerning vocabulary is Dr. Furnivall's; "to suppose", he said, "that a play, in whose first few lines noblemen called for their 'coaches' (instead of their horses) was written before 1595, was too absurd."² Such usage is not so absurd as Dr. Furnivall's characteristic impetuosity would make it appear. There is ample evidence for the frequent use of the word in Elizabethan history and literature. This may well be the first appearance of the word in English drama, but both the article and the name were familiar in both life and literature long before the date to which Dr. Furnivall was opposed.

The dated occurrences of the word in non-dramatic literature before 1590 indicate the unsoundness of Furnivall's argument: 1556, Burgon, Life of Gresham (1839), I, 483, "Peradventure my Lady...cannot ride. Thereto will I provide this remedy,-

¹Transactions of the New Shakspeare Society (London, 1880-86), Series I, 8, 9, 10, p. 145*.

²Ibid.

to send her my coche"; 1561, Daus, Tr., Bullinger on Apoc. (1573), 251, "They haue their horselitters, Cochees, and charrettes right notable"; 1562, Diurnal of Occurrences, 4 May, "My Lord Arrane was convoyijt in the quenis graces cosche"; 1577, Northbrooke, Treatise against Dicing (Nares) I, 169, "If hee had beene for the bodie, our gentlemen and gentlwomen, with out rich farmours in oure parish, would have beene there, although they had been caried in wagons or coches"; 1580, R. Robinson, Gold. Mirr. (1850), 57, "Her coyche was burn'd, that day she married was"; 1590, Spenser, Faerie Queene, I. iv. 16, "The roiall Dame...for her coche doth call". In addition, the following occurrences of the word in the drama of the period may be cited: Nobody and Somebody, l. 536, "Is my coach ready, where are all my men/ That should attend upon our awful frowne?"; Blind Beggar of Bednal Greene, G2b "Tamberlayne and his Coatch-horses"; 2 Huntington, "Our coach is ready: we will soon be there"; Dekker, Satiromastix, Act II, sc. i, "you have all a honest woman shud have ? Min. Yes perdie, as my coach, and my fan..."; Act III, sc. i, "thou shalt be carted, drawne, I meane, coacht, coacht, thou shalt ryde jiggd-jogge"; Greene, Alphonsus, l. 1249, "Hyperions coach that well be termd it might"; Orlando, l. 1075, "That gallop by the Coach of Cynthia"; l. 1178, "with that, mounted on her parti-coloured coach"; Shakspeare, L.L.L., IV. iii. 34; IV. iii. 155; T. Andron., II. i. 7; M. of Ven., III. iv. 82; Mer. Wives, II. ii. 66; Hamlet, IV. v.

72.

Finally, there are the arguments based on the cuts in the manuscript that may be evidence of a seventeenth century date.

Since several of the arguments concern the state of the existing manuscript, it may be well to summarize the findings of Wilhelmina P. Frijlinck who has recently given it a very intensive study in connection with her edition of the play for the Malone Society. In the manuscript, as it has come down to us, Miss Frijlinck believes that she is able to distinguish the presence of eight hands aside from that of the scribe who is responsible, not only for the text itself but also for a considerable number of corrections and deletions. Of these hands, A and B are closely associated with the work of the scribe himself. The work of A is confined for the most part to the supplying of the speakers' names on fols. 176b and 177a and the additions and correction of a few elsewhere. Hand B seems to have supplied "nearly all the speakers' names on fols. 183b and 184a, and two on fol. 184b." Hand C appears, she believes, only in the numbering of the acts. The other hands, D to H, are concerned with a few minor corrections and prompt directions. If her findings in this respect are sound, they suggest a repeated use of the manuscript in a succession of productions, an hypothesis which her description of the worn and soiled state of the manuscript itself makes plausible.

With regard to the responsibility for various cuts in

the manuscript, it is unnecessary to reproduce Miss Frijlinck's arguments in detail. In the case of all except two of the cuts Miss Frijlinck believes that the hands are those of either the scribe or one of the producers of the play, and that in each case they may have been made either to forestall criticism or to increase dramatic effectiveness. Indeed, there is only one instance, the bracketing of lines 36-42, in which she believes the suggested omission may have been to forestall criticism.

In the case of only two lines does she feel it necessary to invoke the power of the censor. "The alteration 'my leege' (832) seems to be in a different hand from the scribe's (possibly the prompter's); 837 'cuss' is deleted in brown ink over a pencil deletion; the ink used for these deletions and the alteration is a light brown one (I) different from the text, though not different from the ink used by the scribe elsewhere; a pencil cross occurs opposite 832....It seems quite possible that these deletions in Woodstock are by Buc, who certainly would not approve of a king being addressed as 'cuss', and he may have made them on the occasion of a later revival after 1603." This latter assumption would help explain the deletion of line 908, 'Superior lord of Scotland'. All these deletions, however, point to the existence of the text in a period before 1603, and to its revival and slight revision in a later period.

Boas also regards as evidence for a late date the presence of certain actors' names in the manuscript. In this connection, he writes:

But what is of greatest interest is that four of the plays, The Captives, Thomas of Woodstock, The Two Noble Ladies, and Edmond Ironside, contain, in addition to the other notes and directions, the names here and there of actors who played minor parts.¹

In Thomas of Woodstock, I. i. (f. 162) G[r]ad [ell] has been written over part of the direction prefixed to l. 124. He evidently played the small part of 'Lord Mayre'. In III. ii. (f. 172v.), 'George' (who may be identified with George Stutfield) is noted in the part of a servant, and in IV. ii. (f. 178v.), where the marginal stage direction is Ser: [vant], the later hand has erased 'Ser:' and substituted the name of the actor, 'Toby'.²

The meaning of this very interesting evidence he proceeds to state as follows:

It is clear from the interlacing of the actors' names that at any rate The Captives, The Two Noble Ladies, Edmond Ironsides, and Thomas of Woodstock, were played by the same company. It does not, of course, follow that the actors, whose names have been preserved, were the original creators of their (usually very minor) roles. It will be shown that those of them whom we can identify 'flourished' in the third and fourth decades of the seventeenth century.³

The presence of these late players' names is pro tanto an argument against either of the plays having been written some thirty or forty years before the entries were made.⁴

In a discussion and interpretation of this same evidence Miss Frijlinck comes to what seem to me to be more reasonable conclusions. Assuming with Boas that these actors' names point to the use of the play by a company visiting Norwich in 1635, she agrees with Sir E.K. Chambers, however, in considering the

03. ¹Shakespeare and the Universities (New York, 1923), 102-

²Ibid., p. 104.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 163.

identification of 'Geo Stut:' with George Stutfield as "rather hazardous", since "George Stutfield heads the Norwich list, and it seems unlikely that he should have taken the very unimportant part of a servant in Woodstock". She thinks it wiser to read 'G.ad', not as Gradell, who does not appear on the Norwich list at all, but as Goad (for Christopher Goad) whose name occurs sixth on the Norwich list.¹

This evidence may perhaps point to the fact that Woodstock was part of the repertory of some company acting in the twenties or thirties. It should, however, be obvious that the production of the play in the thirties of the seventeenth century does not necessitate its having been written immediately before production, even though a copy in manuscript has come down to us. It would seem very hazardous to base the date of composition of any play upon a few very uncertain facts about a particular production.

Enough has, I believe, been said to establish the contention that (1) the use of the word coaches, (2) the association of this play with a group of seventeenth century manuscripts; (3) the age of the manuscript itself; (4) the nature of the cuts; (5) the presence of the names of seventeenth century actors do not prevent our assigning the original form of the play to the early nineties of the sixteenth century.

¹For a detailed statement of the arguments with regard to actors' names, see The First Part of the Reign of Richard the Second, "Malone Society Reprints" (London, 1929), pp. xviii-xxix.

On the other hand, (1) a large amount of evidence demonstrates unquestionably an amazingly close connection between Woodstock and Edward II. That evidence is of such a nature as to make it clear that the mind of one of the authors was saturated with the matter and style of the other, and the nature of the borrowings is such that there is no doubt that the weaker of the two men borrowed from the stronger. There have probably been few clearer examples of servile subservience in literature than the case that has been presented.¹

(2) The relationship between Woodstock and the Henry VI trilogy, in particular, the Second Part of Henry VI, is more difficult to demonstrate. I believe, however, that it has been possible to show instances of real borrowing, not so extensive or so minute as in the case of Edward II, but really significant.² The intimate relationship between Woodstock and Edward II, and Woodstock and the Second Part of Henry VI goes very far, in my opinion, to demonstrate an early date for this play. It is quite conceivable, of course, that an author in the second or third decade of the seventeenth century might have been inspired to imitate one of these plays, perhaps Edward II, but it hardly seems credible that he should have selected two plays of a period from twenty or thirty years before his time for slavish

¹The evidence in support of this argument has been presented systematically in Chapter II (of the complete dissertation).

²See Chapter III (of the complete dissertation) for the detailed presentation of the evidence concerned with this argument and for the consideration of the possible influence of the First Part of the Contention.

imitation, especially since one of the plays belonged to a series and in a sense had little independent identity. The overwhelming influence of neither one of these plays would have sufficed to demonstrate an early date; the influence of both together gives it almost complete certainty. There is, however, other evidence for an early date to be weighed.

(3) Perhaps the problem of most general interest raised by the existence of Woodstock is that of its relations to Shakespeare's Richard II. On this question, authorities are divided. Keller, Boas (at one time), and Creizenach, believed that Richard II contains evidence of Shakspeare's knowledge of Woodstock. Harrison and Furnivall believed that Richard II influenced the author of Woodstock. On this point, the evidence seems to be indecisive, but such evidence as exists does not negate the possibility of the priority of Woodstock to Richard II. In any case, it is not likely that they were written at widely separated intervals, since it is generally agreed that Shakspeare's Richard II was also written directly under the influence of Edward II.¹

(4) Of the same general nature is one's conclusion as to the influence of Richard III upon Woodstock. It is impossible to demonstrate convincingly a direct influence in this case. I am inclined to ascribe the correspondences between the two plays

¹The problems of relationship and the evidence and arguments pro and con have been presented and discussed in Chapter IV (of the complete dissertation).

to borrowing from the common stock of dramatic devices and style of this type.¹

(5) The final argument offered by defenders of the early-date hypothesis has also been used by its opponents, the versification. On this point, it has been necessary to study the play, scene by scene (as no previous student of the play seems to have done), weigh the variations in metre, and attempt to determine their significance for the date of the play. My study of the metre of Woodstock has demonstrated, I believe, a much closer connection with Edward II and Richard II than with chronicle plays written after 1600. This relationship is indicated by the facts that Woodstock comes closest to Edward II in percentage of run-on lines, and closest to Richard II, (a) in the percentage of rhymed lines for the whole play, (b) in the percentage of feminine endings for the whole play, (c) in the range of percentage of run-on lines from scene to scene, and (d) in the percentage of speeches ending within the line, for the whole play.²

I believe that weighty evidence of the early date of the play has been presented in connection with the following arguments: its relation to Edward II, its relation to 2 Henry VI, and its relation to Richard II. None of the arguments in favor of a later date than the early nineties destroys the hypothesis

¹ See Chapters VI and VII (of the complete dissertation) for the evidence for the existence of a common stock of dramatic devices, of which these plays furnish examples.

² See Chapter V (of the complete dissertation) for the evidence and its discussion.

that Woodstock in its original form was written before 1595, and though some revision in the seventeenth century is possible, it was probably comparatively slight.

Finally, the evidence of meter, of cuts, of tragic and chronicle-play and comic conventions, of conventional elements in the diction itself, tend to support and confirm the hypothesis as to an early date.

Woodstock and the Chronicle Play Type

Aside from the detailed consideration I have already given to the relationship (real or alleged) of Woodstock to specific chronicle plays, such as Edward II, The Second Part of Henry VI, and Richard II, a complete study of Woodstock requires the investigation of the place which Woodstock occupies in the history of the chronicle-play type during the Elizabethan and Stuart periods. To be sure, the conclusion to which we come as to the date of Woodstock must needs qualify our findings as to the importance of the play in the history of the type of which it is an example. For instance, if we have been successful in demonstrating that Woodstock belongs to the early nineties, it has, despite its essential mediocrity, more significance than if we had been forced to place its composition, as some students of it would have us do, in the late twenties or thirties of the seventeenth century.

It is, however, always necessary to bear in mind that in the history of a literary type or genre, we must not expect that steady sequence of improvement or development which nineteenth century science tempted careless thinkers to apply to fields where it was not applicable. The idea of evolution, of natural and inevitable progress, has undoubtedly done rather more harm than good to the study of literature.¹ It is quite

¹See John M. Manly, "Literary Forms and the New Theory 210.

as likely that a bad chronicle play should be written by an inferior talent after the appearance of a good one, as that an arrangement of chronicle plays in the order of their aesthetic values would turn out to be the order of their historical creation. The principle of imitation is as important in literature as it is in life, and a distinguished literary work is rather more likely to be followed by inferior imitations than it is to be preceded by a host of experimental failures.

This chapter is concerned, then, with an aesthetic evaluation of Woodstock and other plays of the same type and only incidentally with its historical placement. In such a study it becomes almost immediately apparent that what we usually refer to as the Elizabethan chronicle play was not one, but several kinds of drama, and it becomes necessary to distinguish among them. The most elaborate analysis of the kinds of chronicle plays of our period is that of W.D. Briggs in his Chronicle History,¹ summarized in his variorum edition of Marlowe's Edward II, to which frequent reference has already been made.² In the latter work, he offers the following definition of the chronicle history:

Let us then define the chronicle history as a dramatic composition purporting to draw its material from the chronicles (or from an equivalent source), treating

of the Origin of Species", Modern Philology, V (1907-08), pp. 201-09, for an exposure of the careless thinking that underlies much recent study of literary history.

¹An unpublished dissertation deposited in the Harvard College Library, 1900.

²William D. Briggs, Marlowe's Edward II (London, 1914).

those materials in a way to bring out their accidental (particularly their chronological) relations, recognizing as a rule no other principle of connection than that of personality, and having the general character of a survey of a more or less arbitrarily limited period.¹

He goes on to point out that not all plays belonging to the chronicle play type have all the characteristics involved in his definition; that, for instance

whereas Heywood intended not to develop a plot, but to narrate a series of events, Shakespeare desired not merely to narrate a series of events, but also to develop a plot. The one produced an historical drama, the other a chronicle history. To draw any sharp line of demarcation between the two is perhaps impossible. We may say only that the chronicle history passes into the historical drama when the emphasis is shifted from the accidental to organic relations, from post hoc to propter hoc.²

This transition from chronicle history to historical drama he studies in the plays of the earlier nineties, and finds that The Contention and Edward II (particularly the latter) seem to have shown later dramatists how to attain a higher unity and coherence than the older chronicle plays of the type of The Famous Victories of Henry V and Edward I were capable of. Of The Contention, he says

As we read the Contention, it becomes apparent also that we cannot divide the play into separate and independent lines of interest as was the case with Edward I. Practically all of the material taken from the chronicles bears upon the struggle between the houses of York and Lancaster, with perhaps the exception of one or two minor episodes.....Early in the play there are put into the mouth of York lines designed to give the spectator a point of view and a key to the events that follow.....Moreover, events so apparently irrelevant as Cade's rebellion, and

¹Briggs, Marlowe's Edward II (London, 1914), pp. xxi-ii.
²Ibid., p. xxii.

such apparently retarding episodes as York's own journey to Ireland, are distinctly made to forward his plans.....A fairly consistent point of view is thus maintained, and the action consequently possesses a certain coherence, a logical sequence, foreign to earlier plays. The chronicle history has undergone a gain in distinctness and definiteness in intention.¹

But, he goes on to say,

The defects of the play in the matter of structure are, of course, equally obvious. They arise in the main from an overplus of incident. The downfall of Gloster, the banishment and death of Suffolk, the death of Winchester, are all necessary preliminaries to the execution of York's plans, but are only preliminaries. Presented, however, at such length as in the play, they distract attention and dissipate dramatic interest..... The conception of the survey of a period is still in fact, if not in theory, dominant, and renders impossible a due concentration of interest.²

It is, accordingly, in Edward II, that Briggs finds the first truly historical drama. He shows Marlowe making consciously a very large number of changes in order to secure a close logical connection of incidents.³ He, therefore, is able to conclude that

Marlowe has definitely abandoned the principle of the survey; the list of his omissions, taken by itself, is almost sufficient proof of that fact, and there is abundant confirmatory evidence. He is not content merely to narrate a series of events, but insists, though not always with perfect success, that a given mass of historical material shall be, as it were, integrated. Each incident shall possess, in addition to its independent and purely theatric interest, a cumulative and hence essentially dramatic value. The catastrophe is no longer a point in time simply, but one in evolution, and to understand it we must draw into consideration the entire play. Edward

¹Briggs, Marlowe's Edward II (London, 1914), pp. xcvi-xcviii.

²Ibid., pp. xciii-xcix.

³See the examples cited on pages cii and ciii of the Introduction to Briggs edition.

II, by virtue of the reflective genius of its author, passes almost beyond the limits of our definition of the chronicle history, and becomes a tragedy in the full and large sense, something that a chronicle history, whatever its title, could not be.¹

According to Briggs, then, an historical play of the Elizabethan and Stuart periods may be classified as a chronicle play, when the principle of its structure is that of "a survey of a more or less arbitrarily limited period", or as an historical drama or tragedy when "each incident" possesses "in addition to its independent and purely theatric interest, a cumulative and hence essentially dramatic value". It becomes historical tragedy when "its catastrophe is no longer a point in time simply, but one in evolution", and when "to understand it, we must draw into consideration the entire play".

Although the classification worked out by Briggs is not in all respects satisfactory, as I shall try to show below, it is interesting and useful to compare and contrast it with a somewhat more elaborate one made by Louise M. Kueffner, in her Development of the Historic Drama, which, to be sure, considers the period in which we are interested only for the illumination it throws on the period of her interest, the nineteenth century. Her account of the evolution of the various types of historical drama is, however, worth citing at length. She writes

....ever since the birth of the historic drama in the days of Shakespeare, two conflicting tendencies have

¹Briggs, op. cit., p. six.

been at work to produce a mixed type of tragedy to which almost all serious dramas belong.

On the one hand, the authority and example of antique, especially Senecan "tragedy" fed man's interest for the individual psychological conflicts of a few chief characters. The conflicts usually illustrated the reversals of fortune of known personalities of high rank. The interest, however, centered not in the historic experiences of definite individuals, but in the sufferings and fortitude of these personalities conceived as universally human types. The historic names of the heroes were mere survivals and accident, and they entailed no historic definiteness of any kind. Simplicity of structure and strict observance of the unities were demanded. On the other hand, another type of drama, the "historic", had been developed as a result of an interest for broader historic movements such as conspiracies, riots, rebellions, civil and national wars, and for the strange and marvelous fates of definite individuals who had taken part in these struggles, and who likewise illustrated so largely the "falls of princes". In those days of dramatic enthusiasms, the accounts in the numerous chronicles of what was believed to be true history were freely translated into the dramatic form that had characterized the "Mysteries". There was no thought of restricting the play to the presentation of one crisis or of a single action, no thought of showing logical connection between the events.

For a number of years the two types of drama lived amicably side by side.....

However, as early as 1581 Sidney had quoted the Aristotelian remarks that poetry is higher than history, and that historic material should be fitted into the mold of "tragedy"; he had expressed the doctrine of the observance of the unities, and had suggested that much of the action of the play should be related, not represented. In spite of the subsequent development of the "historic" type, and in spite of the achievements of Shakespeare, these structural demands were urged ever more insistently. These teachings, and the examples given in the plays of Seneca, caused a fusion of the two types of drama, and of the interest in typical themes and characters on the one hand, and in definite conflicts and individuals on the other. Yet it was less a fusion than a victory of the "tragedy". It was thought that the epic "chronicle-history" was an impossible type, and that it had to be transformed into the typical "character-

tragedy", as had been the case in Shakespeare's Richard III, and still more in Macbeth. The result of this demand was the mixed type of drama called "tragedy", in which the historic interest is found in varying proportions of definiteness and conscientiousness, and in which the severe Aristotelian structure is again and again broken, because pictures are often given in these plays of broader movements and backgrounds.¹

Aside, then, from the amorphous chronicle play, Miss Kueffner distinguishes among historical dramas the following types: the character-drama, the symbolic process drama, and the corporate movement-drama. Her definitions are worth transcribing.

The first, the individualistic character-drama, is a variety in which the conflict is the personal, individual experience of a few chief characters; the result of the conflict is a true historic event which produces far-reaching effects, or which is, at least, publicly interesting. The motivation of the action is personal and passional. Here the interest is both historic and psychological, for it consists in the desire to fathom the individual psychological origin of some real public action. The plot merely suggests the broader results of the action or event. The determining environment may be meager, or full and detailed. In its ideal form this variety would be free from distortion of known fact either for the purpose of making motives more humanly comprehensible, or to fit the plot into the guilt and recompense formula.²

What Miss Kueffner calls "the symbolic process drama" she defines as "a variety where the conflict of epochs is given as a revolutionary background illustrated in the foreground by a representative individual conflict which is seen to be a result

¹Kueffner, Development of the Historic Drama (Chicago, 1910), pp. 69-70.

²Ibid., p. 73.

of the larger conflict".¹ Finally, her conception of "the corporate movement-drama" is one in which

a large picture of far-reaching historic events is given, in which the interest for the individual's private problem recedes before the interest in the problem of the masses; the aim is to give a true historic picture in its broad effects, to represent concrete historic movements of large importance. The interest is in many persons and in the whole of which they are a part; it is political or social, not passional or private. The mass, including its greater individuals, not the predominating great individual, is the hero of the drama. The individuals that appear, the conflicts, the determining conditions, and the events, are presented in particular and not in typical terms. Instead of poetic justice, of guilt and retribution, we find the acceptance of events as vindicated by mere occurrence.²

Both Professor Briggs' and Miss Kueffner's attempts to define the types of historical drama throw considerable light upon that amorphous genre. The former is, however, more relevant to our purpose since it limits its material to the historical dramas of the period with which we are concerned, whereas the latter concerns the historical drama during and since the Elizabethan period, with particular attention to the drama that reflects the interest in the social and economic aspects of the mass-movements characteristic of nineteenth century thought. But the ends which the modern historical drama has attained may have had their embryonic beginnings in the crude and unpremeditated chronicle plays before the age of Marlowe.

My own suggested classification of Elizabethan historical drama draws upon both the analyses presented above. I submit

¹Kueffner, Development of the Historic Drama, p. 75.

²Ibid., pp. 75-76.

that the term historical drama is a more inclusive term than chronicle play or chronicle history play for the varieties of plays purporting to draw their material from the chronicles or equivalent sources. The Elizabethan historical drama, I should define, as "a dramatic composition, purporting to draw its material from the chronicles (or from an equivalent source)."

This definition would therefore include such diverse compositions as The Mayor of Queenborough, The Famous Victories of Henry V, Look About You, The Valiant Welshman, James IV, and Richard III. Of the historical drama, I should distinguish three main varieties: the chronicle history, historical comedy, and historical tragedy. The chronicle history, I should define, with a modification of Briggs' definition, as "a dramatic composition purporting to draw its material from the chronicles (or from an equivalent source), and having the general character of a survey of a more or less arbitrarily limited period".

It does not seem to me logical to include as elements of a definition of a type such negative attributes as (1) "treating those materials in a way to bring out their accidental (particularly their chronological) relations", and (2) "recognizing as a rule no other principle of connection than that of personality". To be sure, many Elizabethan historical dramas do have the attributes defined above, but it would be a mistake to imply that they were attributes deliberately aimed at, or that they were attributes essential to the existence of the chronicle drama.

Furthermore, the chronicle history, however crudely or brilliantly created, manifests some of the characteristics of the corporate movement-drama of Miss Kueffner's classification. Its aim is "to give a true historic picture in its broad effects, to represent concrete historic movements of large importance. The interest is in many persons and in the whole of which they are a part; it is political or social, not passiona or private....Instead of poetic justice, or guilt and retribution, we find the acceptance of events as vindicated by mere occurrence." To be sure, the intentions of the writers of chronicle-histories can hardly have been sharply defined, but of the intense interest in historical material in the Elizabethan period there can be little doubt, and the attempts of the earlier writers in this kind to include in their dramas all sorts of historic stuff, whether suitable or not for dramatic presentation, indicated an absorption in that stuff aside from its merely dramatic possibilities.¹ It would, however, be unsound to expect in even the finest examples of the chronicle history of the Elizabethan period, indications of that interest in and sympathy for the people, that comprehension of the sources and influences behind important social and economic changes which the development of the social sciences and the growth of

¹There are numerous instances of the inclusion of undramatic historical matter in narrative or choric form; for instance, the "brief summaries of large parts of the actions which the dramatist was unable to present on the stage, but which he apparently felt should not be omitted." (Briggs, Edward II, p. 1.)

humanitarianism have made familiar in the nineteenth century. But at their best, we do get from Elizabethan chronicle plays a sense of national victory and disaster, of a fate involving not only a few individuals in a strongly focussed light but whole classes of people.

In each kind of the Elizabethan historical drama, it is possible to discover both artistic and inartistic examples, both popular and sophisticated instances, but I think it will be agreed that there are more popular and inartistic examples of the chronicle play than of any of the other kinds. The reasons are not far to seek. To put upon the stage the chronicle text with as few changes as would fit it for being acted rather than merely read, was easy, but to achieve a product with the essential artistic elements of unity or emphasis was enormously difficult and remains so to this day.¹ It seems probable that the audiences of the public theatres during the Elizabethan period could be counted on to enjoy almost any representation of national history and myth provided it involved an adequate amount of flag-waving and drum-beating, combined with

¹For this reason, it is impossible to share Miss Kueffner's faith and hope that what she calls the corporate movement-drama is the emergent modern form. To dramatize social and economic historical movements is an impossible task, at least, in the theatre as it exists. The greatest success of its kind in the modern drama is perhaps Gerhart Hauptmann's The Weavers, and some of the dramatizations of French history from the hand of Romain Rolland. The attempts of Soviet Russia to create a class-conscious drama are too recent and remote to serve as satisfactory instances of the type under discussion.

rustic and gross humors. It is only on the basis of some such hypothesis that we can explain the production of such wretched examples of the chronicle play as Stukely, When You See Me, You Know Me, and Edward I. On the other hand, despite the inherent difficulties of the amorphous type, it was possible for the more acute talents among the Elizabethan dramatists to achieve something like an aesthetically satisfying production along the lines of the chronicle history. The greatest of all the chronicle histories, is, I should suggest, The First and Second Parts of Henry IV, where the unity is of that complex subtle kind which Shakspeare achieved elsewhere of very diverse elements in A Mid-Summer Night's Dream, As You Like It, and Twelfth Night. But other instances of comparatively distinguished successes are Heywood's First and Second Parts of Edward IV, and Shakspeare's Henry VIII.

The remaining terms in the classification of historical dramas that I am suggesting require little or no definition. Historical tragedy, comedy, and tragi-comedy borrow in intention and nature from the larger types of tragedy, comedy, and tragi-comedy, on the one hand, and find their materials in chronicle or pseudo-chronicle material on the other. Historical comedy is not found frequently in the period with which we are concerned, since the materials of "true" history do not offer themselves for largely comic treatment. Here, however, could very well be placed works as difficult of classification as Greene's Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay, and Dekker's Shoe-

maker's Holiday.

Historical tragedy is the most important numerically and aesthetically of the types of historical drama aside from the chronicle history. Its appearance can be accounted for on the grounds suggested by Professor Briggs and Miss Kueffner: the thorough-going influence of classical, especially Senecan, example, the surviving mediaeval interest in the fall of princes, and the necessity felt by such creative artists as Marlowe and Shakspeare for some form into which to cast the rich and moving material discoverable in the chronicles. Here logically belong such plays as Macbeth and King Lear, as well as obvious examples like Edward II and Richard III. Here, too, as in the case of the chronicle history, we find the widest range in quality and appeal from the crudest and most naïve of tragic effects to the incredible complexity of such a world-tragedy as Lear. But it is easy to see, in even the most naïve examples, an effort in the direction of organized and focussed tragedy.

It remains to place Woodstock within the classification suggested above. It is undoubtedly an example of historical tragedy and it is almost as certainly of the relatively naïve sort. Both the psychology and the characterization are of the simplest variety, but the elimination of whatever will not illustrate Richard's tyranny and its disastrous consequences, wins it a respect that one can not bring to the more childish examples of the type. Nor does the large space given to comic elements prevent our designating it as an historical tragedy of

the popular rather than the sophisticated sort; in fact, the space given to comic effects must have made for the wide popularity of the piece.

Aside from the placing of Woodstock in its aesthetic and logical relations to the type to which it belongs, we are concerned with the problem of the chronological position of the play among others of its genre. Though we bear steadily in mind the consideration that aesthetic inferiority says nothing for the date of composition, certain facts with regard to the vogue of the historical drama in the Elizabethan and Stuart periods may be of utility in suggesting the most probable period for the appearance of Woodstock. The facts as to the numbers and the vogue of the historical drama have been worked out most carefully by Felix E. Schelling. He writes as follows:

Between 1562, the date of the performance of Gorboduc, and the closing of the theatres in 1642 there is record of more than a hundred and fifty plays dealing with subjects drawn from the history of England and from what went for such at that time. Of these, about half are extant; the remainder of which, many never reached the press, disappeared after having served the purpose of the moment....The distribution of these plays over the period of the reigns of Elizabeth and James is significant. About a dozen dramas yet extant fall before the year 1590, one of them the Latin comedy, Byrsa Basilica, two others, the Latin college plays on Richard III.,....Of the remainder, Gorboduc and The Misfortunes of Arthur were written, as we have seen, under the immediate influence of Seneca; Lochrine partially so. The three undoubted chronicle plays discussed above make up the count. Two more of these plays, Fair Em and James IV. of Scotland, are pseudo-historical and may date a little later. In the next decade, 1590 to 1600, the Chronicle Play attained its greatest popularity. Nearly eighty plays, less than half of which are extant, fall therein. In this period this species of drama was elevated by Marlowe and Shakespeare from a mere drame de circonstance,

declaiming against popery, as in The Troublesome Raigne of John, or abusive of the enemies of England as in the gross misrepresentations of Queen Elinor of Castile in Edward I. and of Joan of Arc in 1 Henry VI. to an artistic utterance containing a universal appeal.

With the coming of the new century, this class of plays was superseded in popular esteem by the romantic drama and the comedy of manners, and the recorded examples of the Chronicle Play fall to some thirty, most of them acted in the first years of the century. Of these less than half have survived. After 1610 plays the subjects of which are drawn from English history and myth are rare and the choice of such subjects must be regarded as for the most part accidental, whilst their treatment is not infrequently purely romantic.¹

The facts just adduced are relevant to our problem in that they create a strong antecedent probability that any undated Elizabethan chronicle play is far more likely to belong to the decade 1590-1600 than to any other decade before 1642. To place Woodstock as late as 1630, as Mr. Boas would have us do, requires a strong defence of the appearance of a stray historical tragedy at that late period. Moreover, its markedly imitative nature offers a presumption that, had the play been written in the thirties, it would have found its models in the somewhat more sophisticated characterization, structure, and style of the Stuart period. The slavish imitation of Edward II, the vaguer but not less definite influence of the Second Part of Henry VI, the generally naïveté of the style, the psychology, and the moral atmosphere, tend to place Woodstock where other evidence we have presented would place it, shortly after the composition of Edward II and the Second Part of Henry VI, and not at a time when few historical plays were appearing, and when imitation of this particular pair of plays would be most improbable.

¹The English Chronicle Play (New York, 1902), pp. 51-54.

